

Perceptions of Career & Technical Education:

Findings & Action from the 2019 DESE CTE Survey

Dr. Robert Russell

Dr. Mark C. White

January 27, 2020

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
 **Extension**

an equal opportunity/ADA institution

Agenda

- About the survey and survey comments
- Key findings from the survey
- Key findings from the comments

About the survey and survey comments

About the survey

- The survey was conducted at the behest of the Statewide CTE Advisory Council.
- Intended to inform a communication and marketing campaign, the success of which is dependent on:
 - “...a clear understanding of audience members’ pre-existing opinions — be they rightly or wrongly held.”
- We must understand what people believe before we can change minds.

Key Findings from the Survey

Greatest perception gap between adults and students

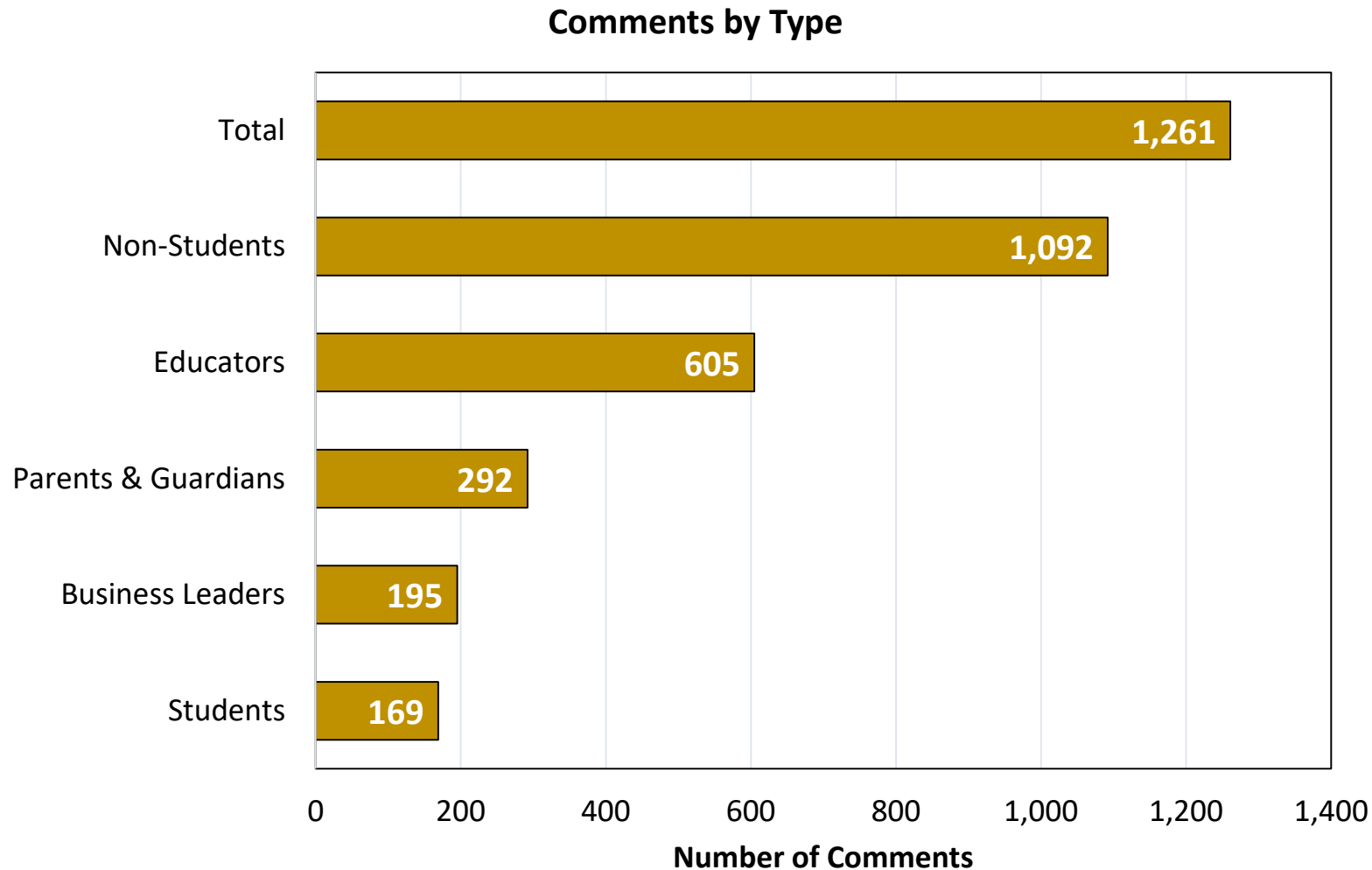
- Adult respondents do not have a negative perception of CTE, but they perceive that one exists.
 - Many adults do not equate CTE with college; students appear somewhat less certain.
- Students often lack awareness of CTE-related earning and education opportunities.
 - Assumptions about negative perceptions of CTE are more commonly held by adults
- *This lack of awareness is found primarily among **non-CTE students**.*

Key gaps exist among adult groups

- Parents have a broadly positive view of CTE education, but *lack knowledge about CTE-related credentials, programs & opportunities*.
- Almost 90% of educators agree that CTE exposure should begin before HS, but *K-8 teachers have relatively less knowledge about CTE-related activities and opportunities*.
- Business leaders see a role for industry participation in CTE education, but *that desire does not always translate into action* (e.g., creating work-based learning opportunities, internships, etc).

Comments

The survey received 1,261 total comments, of which almost 87 percent were from adults



Comments reinforce the findings of the survey, especially the lack of knowledge of CTE and the continuing negative perception of CTE

- Educators, Parents and Students all express a lack of knowledge of CTE programs and pathways.

“My sons school (FZN) must not offer CTE yet. Other than this post today, I have never heard of it.”

- Commenters add clarity about the continuing negative perceptions of CTE.

“Career and Technical programs are seen as a place where kids with bad grades and problems behaving in a classroom go.”

Comments reinforce the findings of the survey and add detail about connections with businesses as well as the benefits of CTE.

- Business Leaders highlighted challenges – and several successes – in connecting with CTE programs.

“We would love to partner with local schools, but don't know where to get started. The schools rarely reach out to us.”

- Current – and former – CTE students highlight the skills developed in these courses.

“As someone that has taken CTE classes, I can personally attest to the value it provides. It does a great job of helping students prepare for the workforce while teaching them important job skills.”

Accessibility to CTE programs is a broad issue that only emerges through the comments

- Geographic distance to CTE programs limits interest and creates challenges for school districts.

“We are a large school district that could maintain our own program, but currently we bus our students 45 miles one way. I feel as though the lack of opportunity within our own town hinders the number of students attending and receiving training.”

- Students often do not have time in their schedules to explore CTE.

“Between graduation requirements and popular electives such as Music, etc. it is hard for many students to fit CTE courses in to their schedules.”

Accessibility also impacted by program capacity and an inability to explore CTE classes early enough in their education

- Limited capacity of many CTE programs makes it difficult for students to participate in these courses.

“We are only allowed to send a very limited number of students to the local program at a neighboring district and if a student is not chosen then they miss out on the opportunity.”

- There’s a strong demand to begin CTE earlier in high school – or even in middle school!

“I also feel that students should be able to start CTE as early as a freshman in high school. My child's current School only allows students to take CTE courses their Junior and Senior year.”

Accessibility to work-based learning also impacting CTE

- Comments point towards a need for more work-based learning opportunities.

“I would also like to see more flexibility with internships. For example, a student could attend class 2-3 days per week and be on the job 2-3 days per week. So that they are learning to apply in the process.”

Counselors are key to helping students – and parents – explore educational and career pathways

“School Counselors are the gatekeepers. If you want to increase enrollment in CTE classes, ensure counselors are knowledgeable and willing to encourage all students to participate in CTE.”

Key Findings and Conclusions from the Comments

- Comments reinforce many of the key survey findings while also adding clarity to those findings.
- Accessibility to CTE programs emerges as a key issue through the comments, though accessibility was not a focus of the survey.
 - Distance, limited time in student's schedules, and capacity issues all impact ability to participate in CTE courses.
- Counselors are repeatedly identified as key gatekeepers with significant influence over students and parents.
 - The role of counselors is particularly significant as students explore careers and plan their educational pathways.

Questions?

Thank you!

- Robert Russell, Ph.D.
 - Director, Labor and Workforce Development
 - Assistant Extension Professor, Truman School of Public Affairs
 - E-Mail: russellrob@Missouri.edu
- Mark C. White, Ph.D.
 - Associate Extension Professor
 - State Specialist, Labor and Workforce Development
 - Interim Director, Truman School of Public Affairs
Institute of Public Policy
 - E-Mail: whitemc@missouri.edu